

More Than 30 Years of Serving With Excellence

The Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) is the state government agency that provides training, services, and other opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, so that each person can achieve his or her own goals for independence and/or employment. Michigan Commission for the Blind services are available to blind and visually impaired residents of all 83 counties of the state. Services may be provided in a person's home, at Mini Adjustment Programs held at various locations around the state, at the residential MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo, and/or other locations.

MCB was created under Public Act 260 of 1978. Federal guidance is provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration

(RSA) of the United States Department of Education. MCB programs are funded under various federal grants with matching state revenues, with a budget of \$21 million during fiscal year 2008. Specific programs and services include the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for individuals age 14 and over, Business Services for employers, the Independent Living Program for individuals age 55 and over, DeafBlind Services, Youth Services, and the Business Enterprise Program for training in food service entrepreneurship. MCB has offices in Lansing, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Flint, Escanaba, Gaylord, and Kalamazoo, as well as the residential MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo, and a staff of nearly 100 to serve the state's estimated 45,000 persons who are blind.

During 2008, MCB's 30th anniversary year, the agency continued in the spirit of its mission and vision statements:

Mission Statement: The mission of the Michigan Commission for the Blind is to provide opportunity to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve employability and/or function independently in society.

Vision Statement: Someday it will be said that Michigan is a great place for blind people to live, learn, work, raise a family, and enjoy life because:

1. An excellent array of rehabilitation and education services are fully accessible to blind people,
2. Blind people in Michigan believe in themselves and their capacity to achieve excellence,
3. The state's general population believes in the abilities of blind people and understands what blindness is and what it is not, and
4. Michigan employers understand, believe in, and hire people who are blind.

MCB Commission Board
Commission Chair Jo Ann Pilarski
Commission Vice Chair Velma P. Allen
Commissioner Mark Eagle
Commissioner Geraldine G. Taeckens
Commissioner Margaret Wolfe

MCB State Director
Patrick Cannon

Highlights of 2008 Accomplishments

Training for Employment and Independence

- ❖ MCB conducted three week-long Mini Adjustment Programs during FY2008—one each in Traverse City, Saginaw, and Farmington Hills—as an introduction to skills of blindness training, including a new computer class, for a total of 88 clients.
- ❖ Day-long Employment Readiness Seminars for clients were held in conjunction with the Mini Adjustment Programs in Traverse City, Saginaw, and Farmington Hills. More than 50 clients participated in mock interviews and learned about job searching, Michigan Works!, the Talent Bank, interview preparation, resume development, Social Security benefits and work incentives, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how it relates to employment of persons with disabilities.
- ❖ At the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo, 208 program participants received services during fiscal year 2008, including personal adjustment training, college assessment, and Business Enterprise Program evaluations and math class. A total of 1,075 weeks of service were provided (counting individuals more than once if they participated in more than one program).
- ❖ MCB Training Center career exploration programming has been enhanced with classes to cover all phases of the search for employment, a new access technology class enhances information access and communication, a second Braille classroom has been added, and a new life skills class introduces students to information access points, community services, and assistive devices.
- ❖ The Michigan Commission for the Blind collaborated with Michigan Rehabilitation Services and the Michigan Department of Corrections to provide services to blind and visually impaired prisoners returning to their communities.

Programs for Blind Youth

- ❖ MCB offered 10 summer programs for approximately 90 blind and visually impaired youth to receive training in skills of blindness, learn career preparation skills, and have work experience.
- ❖ During FY2008, nine Business Enterprise Program entrepreneurs offered to provide paid job experience opportunities for youth in the food service industry.

Employment Opportunities for Blind Entrepreneurs

- ❖ The Business Enterprise Program opened a new business opportunity at the United States Postal Service Metroplex facility in Pontiac. Eighty-six blind entrepreneurs operate food service businesses statewide.

Serving Michigan Veterans

- ❖ In collaboration with Michigan Rehabilitation Services and the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, the Michigan Commission for the Blind entered into a formal agreement with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VAVRE) to provide vocational rehabilitation services to veterans who have lost their sight in the line of duty.

Outreach


- ❖ MCB celebrated its 30th anniversary year with outreach events in Detroit, Marquette, Lansing, Kalamazoo, Gaylord, Flint, and Grand Rapids targeted to disability

organizations and professionals, health fair participants, employers, partner organizations, state employees, and the general public, providing information on MCB services for clients and employers.

- ❖ The 25th anniversary of BEP highway vending opportunities was celebrated with a commemorative event near Clare.
- ❖ MCB continued to provide information and education on its services through outreach to employers, especially during Investing in Abilities Month in October, and to eye care professionals, especially during Blindness Prevention and Services Month in April.

Exemplary Performance and Leadership

- ❖ The Michigan Commission for the Blind was awarded the prestigious Navigator Award, the second-highest of the awards presented by the Michigan Quality Council, based on the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence criteria.
- ❖ MCB Rehabilitation Teacher Roberta McCall received the Elizabeth Lennon Meritorious Achievement Award (an international award), presented by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- ❖ MCB Rehabilitation Counselor Michelle Visscher received the Margaret E. Fairbairn Award presented by the National Rehabilitation Association to honor her exemplary work in job placement.



Dr. Ruta Sharangpani became a client of MCB in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program when she was in high school and attended the MCB College Prep Program at the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo. She earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University in biology, graduating as one of the top students in her class. She received her doctor of medicine (M.D.) degree from Wayne State University, became employed at the Detroit Medical Center as an internist, and returned to school and completed a master's degree in public health.

How New Clients Are Referred to MCB for Services

Self-referrals	.....51.6%	Postsecondary Schools	.....1.0%
Public Education	.....9.2%	Social Service Agencies	.....1.0%
Medical Agencies, Physicians	.....9.0%	Michigan Works!	.....0.5%
Community Rehab Programs	.....6.5%	Other	.....19.5%
Social Security Administration	.....1.7%	TOTAL	.....100%

Of the telephone calls received by MCB from January through September 2008 from or regarding new clients, these were the sources of information that prompted the call:

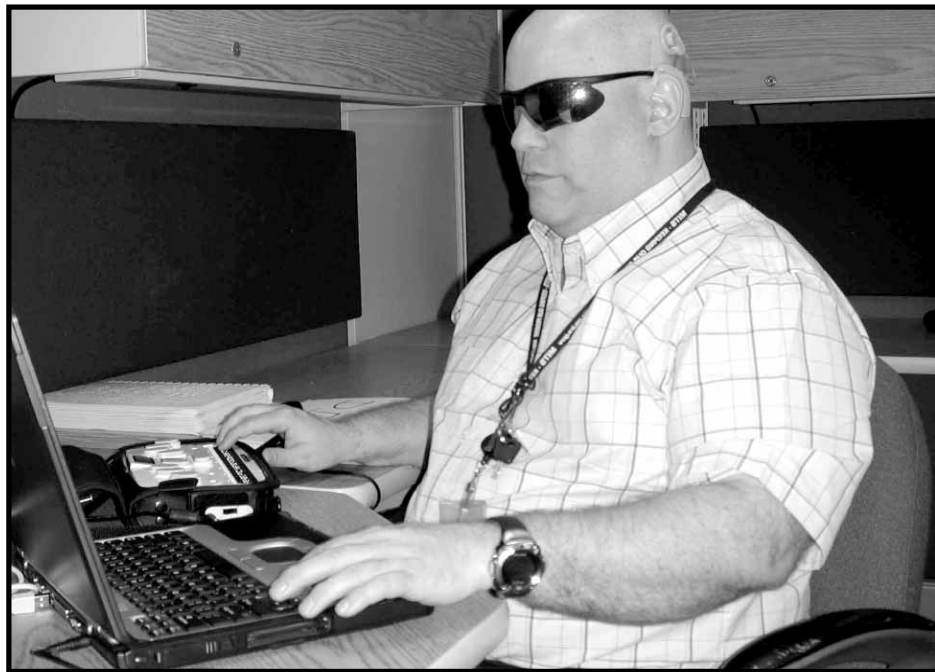
Doctor/health care professional	....32%	Media (TV, radio, print, online)	....3%
Other organizations	.....30%	MCB website	.....3%
Family member	.....27%	Other	.....5%
		TOTAL	.....100%

For the telephone calls above, 47 percent of new clients received Independent Living Program services, 45 percent received Vocational Rehabilitation Program services, and eight percent received other types of services.

Return on Investment

Dollars used for rehabilitation services are an excellent investment in Michigan's future. In FY 2008, the Michigan Commission for the Blind successfully closed 225 blind Michigan residents' cases. Of these, 175 people found jobs in competitive employment, with an average starting wage of \$12.96 an hour. The state and federal income tax paid by these individuals is projected to be \$812,668 in FY 2009. The total investment made by MCB to assist these individuals with employment—\$1 million—will be "repaid" in approximately 15 months.

During fiscal year 2008, the Michigan Commission for the Blind served approximately 3,500 individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist them in becoming employed and independent. In addition to the 175 employed individuals mentioned above, nearly 1,400 older individuals facing sight loss received independent living services from the commission so they could remain in their homes and communities, and more than 400 blind youth in the K-12 system received low vision evaluations and aids to help them succeed in school and beyond.



Michael Reese, shown above, received DeafBlind Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Program services from MCB that made it possible for him to retain his job as a computer programmer in spite of his increasing vision loss and hearing loss.

Serving Michigan Now and in the Future

According to an August 2008 statement from the U.S. Census Bureau, "In 2030, when all of the baby boomers will be 65 and older, nearly one in five U.S. residents is expected to be 65 and older. This age group is projected to increase to 88.5 million in 2050, more than doubling the number in 2008 (38.7 million)." Through its Futuristic Ad Hoc Committee, consisting of MCB staff, partners, stakeholders and MCB clients, MCB has taken these measures to prepare for Michigan's future needs:

- ❖ Collaborated with agencies such as the Office of Services to the Aging and Area Agencies on Aging to increase service for seniors who are blind or visually impaired.
- ❖ Worked collaboratively with Centers for Independent Living to foster opportunities for inclusion for blind and visually impaired individuals.
- ❖ Established avenues to better provide blind rehabilitation services to veterans injured in the line of duty through an agreement with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns.
- ❖ Identified technology developers to encourage them to build accessibility into devices and equipment during the early product development stage.
- ❖ Collaborated with the MCB Technology Committee to promote MCB's technology goals and to seek their assistance in developing standards for technology trainers for MCB clients.
- ❖ Explored and identified existing media that would educate employers about various technologies that can be utilized to assist blind and visually impaired individuals in the workplace.

For more information about the Michigan Commission for the Blind, call voice 1-800-292-4200, or TTY 1-888-864-1212, or visit the MCB website at www.michigan.gov/mcb.

Michigan Commission for the Blind

(Central Administrative Office)

P.O. Box 30652

201 N. Washington Square

Lansing, MI 48909

Toll free: 1-800-292-4200; TTY: 1-888-864-1212

Fax: 517-335-5140

www.michigan.gov/mcb



This publication is available on the MCB website in PDF and Microsoft Word formats at www.michigan.gov/mcb. MCB/DELEG is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids, services, alternative formats, and other reasonable accommodations are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Printed by authority of DELEG. 02/2009 Quantity: 5,000; Total cost: \$2,143.17; Unit cost: \$0.43; DELEG 0000-000

2008 Annual Report

Michigan Commission for the Blind

*Changing Lives,
Changing Attitudes,
for more than 30 years*



Francia Malone received services from MCB that helped her to become successfully self-employed as an events planner